

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 01885 01 OF 02 101123Z
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1295

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 JERUSALEM 1885

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EYES ONLY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IS, JO, XF
SUBJECT: TO GET WEST BANKERS ON BOARD

1. THIS MESSAGE ATTEMPTS TO DESCRIBE THE COMBINATION OF POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT WOULD INDUCE AUTHENTIC WEST BANK/GAZA LEADERS TO TAKE PART IN ELECTIONS AND PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERIM ADMINISTRATION. ALL ARE INEXTRICABLY INTERRELATED. THE KEY IS OBVIOUSLY A CREDIBLE ISRAELI COMMITMENT OF EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS. HOWEVER, THIS IN ITSELF WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH. PRECISION IS OBVIOUSLY IMPOSSIBLE. WE WILL NOT KNOW UNTIL THE MOMENT OF TRUTH WHAT CAN BE DONE AND WITH WHOM. UNLIKE THE EGYPTIANS, THE WEST BANK/GAZA PALESTINIANS DO NOT APPEAR TO BE DESPERATE. THEY ARE FRUSTRATED AND BITTER, BUT THEY SEEM TO BELIEVE (RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY) THAT THE LONG TERM TIDE OF EVENTS IN THE AREAS IS IN THEIR FAVOR AND THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION CANNOT LAST INDEFINITELY. RATHER THAN ACCEPT SOMETHING LIKE THE BEGIN PLAN OR SOME OTHER ARRANGEMENT THEY STRONGLY DISLIKE, THEY SAY THEY ARE WILLING TO LIVE FOR A GENERATION OR MORE UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION.

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PAGE 02 JERUSA 01885 01 OF 02 101123Z

ALTHOUGH MANY FEAR THE INCREASING JUDAIZATION OF ARAB LANDS THROUGH ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY AND SEE THIS AS ONE OF THE MAJOR UNACCEPTABLE FEATURES OF THE BEGIN PLAN.

2. COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAWAL - THE SINE QUA NON OF WEST BANK PARTICIPATION: PUBLICLY, THE ELECTED AND MANY OF THE NON-ELECTED WEST BANK LEADERS SUPPORT THE RABAT DECISIONS,

UN GA RESOLUTION 3236 AND THE POSITION OF THE PLO. PRIVATELY, THEY ARE WILLING TO RECOGNIZE AND LIVE IN PEACE WITH ISRAEL IN EXCHANGE FOR WITHDRAWAL TO THE 1967 BORDERS. SINCE ISRAEL WILL NOT GIVE SUCH A COMMITMENT, SOME OTHER FORMULA MUST BE FOUND WHICH WOULD CONSTITUTE A CREDIBLE COMMITMENT IN THE EYES OF THE WEST BANKERS TO SUBSTANTIAL WITHDRAWAL. WE BELIEVE SOME RESPECTABLE WEST BANKERS MIGHT BE WILLING "TO GO ALONG" WITH A DECLARATION THAT, IF ISRAEL OBTAINS SATISFACTION ON THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF 242, IT WOULD BE PREPARED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE WEST BANK/GAZA TO BORDERS (I.E. THE 1967 BORDERS WITH MINOR CHANGES) TO BE NEGOTIATED BY THE END OF A FIXED INTERIM PERIOD. THE HISTORY OF THE ZIONIST-ARAB CONFLICT AND ISRAELI ACTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, INCLUDING JERUSALEM, SINCE 1967 CONVINCE THE WEST BANKERS THAT ISRAEL INTENDS TO HOLD ON TO THESE AREAS EVEN IF IT MEANS THE COLLAPSE OF THE ISRAELI-EGYPT DIALOGUE AND CONFRONTATION WITH THE U.S. THE BEGIN PLAN IS SEEN IN THIS LIGHT. HOWEVER THE COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAWAL IS FORMULATED, WEST BANKERS WILL HAVE TO BE ABLE TO ASSURE THEMSELVES AND THEIR FELLOW PALESTINIANS THAT THEY ARE ENGAGED IN A PROCESS THAT WILL RESULT IN A HALT TO AND EVENTUAL REVERSAL OF THE PRESENT TREND OF ISRAELI COLONIZATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. ANY FORMULA WHICH LEAVES THIS CRUCIAL POINT IN DOUBT OR WHICH IMPLIES ISRAELI WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER ONLY SYMBOLIC WITHDRAWAL (ALONG THE LINES OF PROPOSALS TO HUSSEIN IN SECRET CONTACTS IN THE SECRET

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PAGE 03 JERUSA 01885 01 OF 02 101123Z

EARLY 1970'S) WILL FAIL TO ELICIT SIGNIFICANT WEST BANK PARTICIPATION.

3. PLO AND OTHER ARAB REACTION. THE ATTITUDE OF THE PLO AND ARAB STATES WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT. PUBLICLY THE PLO CAN BE EXPECTED TO OPPOSE ANY SOLUTION WHICH DOES NOT ACCORD WITH THE RABAT DECISION AND GA RESOLUTION 3236. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE PLO SEES THAT THERE IS A GENUINE POSSIBILITY FOR WITHDRAWAL, IT WILL NOT WANT TO BE LEFT ON THE SIDELINES. THUS, WHILE ADOPTING AN OVERTLY CRITICAL POSTURE, THE PLO MIGHT PRIVATELY INDICATE THAT IT HAS NO OBJECTION AND SECRETLY ENCOURAGE ITS STALWARTS TO PARTICIPATE (E.G. THE FORMULA ADOPTED DURING THE 1976 WEST BANK MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WHICH BROUGHT THE PRESENT MAYORS TO POWER). STRONG PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CONDEMNATION BY THE PLO WOULD CERTAINLY INHIBIT MANY WEST BANKERS FROM PARTICIPATING FOR POLITICAL REASONS AS WELL AS CONCERN FOR THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY. GIVEN THE PLO'S INFLUENCE IN THE WEST BANK/GAZA, IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO REFRAIN FROM GRATUITOUS ATTACKS ON IT AND TO USE OUR INFLUENCE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO STRENGTHEN ARAFAT AND THE MODERATE LEADERSHIP. ABU NIDAL AND GEORGE HABBASH WILL CERTAINLY

GO ALL OUT IN THEIR OPPOSITION AND WILL THREATEN ASSASSINATION.
THIS MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT THAT FATAH DOES NOT
ADOPT THE SAME LINE. JORDAN'S POSITION IS ALSO INFLUENTIAL.
WEST BANKERS WOULD REASONS HUSSEIN WOULD NOT DARE TO PLAY AN
ACTIVE ROLE UNLESS HE WAS CONVINCED ISRAEL WAS PREPARED
VENTUALLY TO WITHDRAW. IF HE REMAINS ON THE SIDELINES, ALL
TALK OF A CHOICE OF NATIONALITIES AS CONTAINED IN THE BEGIN
PLAN REMAINS HOLLOW. TO SUCCEED, THE EFFORT WOULD ALSO HAVE
TO BE BACKED BY EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA. SYRIA, LIKE THE
PLO WOULD BE PLACED ON THE SPOT. ALTHOUGH ITS POSITION
WOULD HAVE SOME IMPACT, SYRIA IS SEEN AS BEING MIRED DOWN
IN LEBANON AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE WEST BANK IS NOT AS
GREAT AS IT WAS BEFORE ITS HEAVY INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON.
IT IS ASSUMED LIBYA, ALGERIA AND PERHAPS IRAQ WOULD

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SECRET

PAGE 04 JERUSA 01885 01 OF 02 101123Z

OPPOSE. THEIR OPPOSITION WOULD NOT BE DECISIVE.

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 01885 02 OF 02 101426Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 JERUSALEM 1885

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EYES ONLY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS

4. PALESTINIAN HOMELAND. THE ATTAINMENT OF SOMETHING
WHICH CAN BE REGARDED AS A PALESTINIAN NATIONAL HOMELAND
HAS A POWERFUL EMOTIONAL APPEAL. REALISTICALLY, MOST
WEST BANK LEADERS RELUCTANTLY RECOGNIZE THAT THEY ARE
UNABLE TO REALIZE THEIR PRESENT DEMAND: SELF-DETERMINATION

AND AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINE (FOLLOWED BY FREELY NEGOTIATED TIES WITH JORDAN). THUS, A NUMBER OF RESPECTABLE WEST BANK LEADERS MIGHT BE WILLING TO ACCEPT AN INTERIM PERIOD OF FIXED DURATION AT THE END OF WHICH THERE WOULD BE A PLEBISCITE TO RATIFY A LINK WITH JORDAN WITH PROVISIONS FOR AUTONOMY AND RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY THROUGH DOCUMENTATION, ETC. OBVIOUSLY, WEST BANKERS WOULD SEEK TO NEGOTIATE AS MUCH AUTONOMY AS POSSIBLE AND THIS IN ITSELF WOULD BE AN INDUCEMENT TO PARTICIPATE. WEST BANKERS RATIONALIZE THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THIS SCENARIO AS THE ONLY WAY TO END ISRAELI OCCUPATION. THEY HAVE NO LOVE FOR THE HASHEMITES AND INDEED RECOGNIZE THAT IN MANY RESPECTS THEY WILL HAVE LESS FREEDOM WHEN LINKED TO JORDAN THAN THEY NOW HAVE UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION.

5. REFUGEE RETURN; THIS IS A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND SENSITIVE
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PAGE 02 JERUSA 01885 02 OF 02 101426Z

ISSUE. THIS WOULD BE REGARDED AS A LITMUS PAPER TEXT OF THE SINCERITY OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS. DURING AN INTERIM PERIOD, ISRAEL WOULD INSIST ON HAVING A DECISIVE VOICE IN THE CASE OF GENUINE SECURITY CASES. HOWEVER, WHERE PERSONS HAVE BEEN DEPORTED FOR NON-SECURITY REASONS, CONTROLLED RETURN SHOULD BE PERMITTED. WEIZMAN HAS RECENTLY TAKEN A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

6. SETTLEMENTS. ISRAELI ACTIVITY IN THIS SENSITIVE AREA WILL BE ONE OF THE KEY CRITERIA BY WHICH THE SINCERITY OF THE ISRAELI COMMITMENTS IS JUDGED. IDEALLY, ISRAEL SHOULD SUSPEND FURTHER SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY FOR DURATION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, THEN AN UNDECLARED MORATORIUM SHOULD BE INSTITUTED. AUTHORIZATION OF ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENTS OR CONTINUATION OF THE PRACTICE OF TOLERATING NEW ILLEGAL SETTLEMENTS WILL ONLY CONFIRM PALESTINIAN SUSPICIONS AS TO ISRAELI ANNEXATIONIST INTENTIONS.

7. SECURITY. HAVING LIVED WITH THE ISRAELIS FOR 11 YEARS, MANY WEST BANKERS RECOGNIZE THAT ISRAEL HAS REAL SECURITY CONCERN WHICH MUST BE MET IF WITHDRAWAL IS TO BE ACHIEVED. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS A SUSPICION THAT SECURITY PROVISIONS SUCH AS THOSE IN THE BEGIN PLAN ARE AN ATTEMPT TO PROLONG DE FACTO OCCUPATION. DURING AN INTERIM REGIME, WE BELIEVE WEST BANKERS WOULD ACCEPT AN ISRAELI SECURITY PRESENCE AT THE BRIDGES, ALONG THE RIVER AND AT A LIMITED NUMBER OF CAMPS. THEY WOULD ACCEPT DEMILITARIZATION AFTER THE INTERIM PERIOD. THE KEY QUESTION WOULD BE INTERNAL SECURITY. ISRAELI INSISTENCE ON MAINTAINING INTERNAL SECURITY AS IN THE BEGIN PLAN WOULD BE REGARDED AS COVERT OCCUPATION. RELUCTANTLY, WEST BANKERS MIGHT ACCEPT JOINT OPERATIONS IN THIS SENSITIVE AREA (E.E. ISRAEL, JORDAN,

AND SOME OUTSIDE AGENCY SUCH AS THE UN).

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PAGE 03 JERUSA 01885 02 OF 02 101426Z

8. INDIGENOUS INSTITUTIONS. SURPRISINGLY, THE PROSPECT OF DEVELOPING INDIGENOUS NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS DOES NOT CURRENTLY HAVE MUCH APPEAL. THE CONCEPT HAS BEEN TAINTED BY THE BEGIN PLAN. WEST BANK LEADERS TAKE THE POSITION THAT AT PRESENT THEY ARE FREE TO RUN THEIR OWN AFFAIRS AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK SET BY THE ISRAELI MILITARY GOVERNMENT. AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS AND IN AN ADMINISTRATION DESIGNED TO REPLACE THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WOULD BE DEPENDENT ON WEST BANK PERCEPTIONS OF HOW LIKELY AND HOW SOON THESE DEVELOPMENTS WOULD LEAD TO AN END TO THE OCCUPATION AND AN EXPRESSION OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY.

9. THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF GUESSWORK IN ALL OF THE ABOVE. AT PRESENT, WEST BANKERS AND GAZANS CONSIDER ISRAEL HAS OFFERED NOTHING ON THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF WITHDRAWAL. WERE ISRAEL TO MAKE A GENUINE MOVE IN THIS AREA, IT WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT. WHETHER IT WOULD BE ENOUGH TO BRING WEST BANKERS OUT OF THEIR PRESENT GRIM MOOD WOULD DEPEND ON THE SUBSTANCE AND HOW IT WAS PERCEIVED IN WEST BANK, PLO AND ARAB WORLD EYES.

10. YOUR REACTION WOULD BE WELCOME.

11. THE ABOVE WAS DRAFTED BY CONSUL GENERAL JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE ON R&R JULY 5. IT, OF COURSE, COULD NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE, AS THEN, UNKNOWN EGYPTIAN PLAN. THAT PLAN, WITH ITS EXPLICIT CALL FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AS WELL AS PROVISION FOR ARAB ADMINISTRATION OF WEST BANK/GAZA FROM THE OUTSET OF THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD, SHOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO MANY WEST BANKERS. OUR INITIAL REACTION IS THAT, WITH PLO GREEN LIGHT, REPUTABLE PALESTINIANS WOULD BE WILLING TO RUN FOR OFFICE UNDER SUCH A REGIME IF ISRAEL WERE EVER TO ACCEPT IT.

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PAGE 04 JERUSA 01885 02 OF 02 101426Z

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